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Now, Aren't You Glad You Came?
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We'll Now Have to Say Goodbye.

Paine Publishing Co., Dayton, Ohio

The Dearest Things in Boots

BY
EDNA I. MAC KENZIE

AUTHOR OF
"Susan Gets Ready for Church"
"As Our Washwoman Sees It"
"That Awful Letter"
"The Unexpected Guest"
"Gladys Reviews the Dance"
"The Country Cousin Speaks Her Mind"
"I'm Engaged"
"Ask Ouija"

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PAINE PUBLISHING COMPANY
DAYTON, OHIO

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The Dearest Thing in Boots

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MR. WILSON, proprietor of a ladies' shoe store.

JACK WILSON, his son.

BETTY MOFFATT, the dearest thing in boots.

MISS FIRMROCK, a suffragette.

MRS. ATKINS, an anti-suffragette.

MRS. O'BRIEN, a practical socialist.

TIME OF PLAYING, about forty-five minutes.

COSTUMES

MR. WILSON and JACK wear business suits.

BETTY MOFFATT wears a dainty summer dress and hat, has high-heeled pumps and carries a gay parasol.

MISS FIRMROCK wears an extremely mannish costume. Her boots are very large and low heeled.

MRS. ATKINS' costume is cheap and slouchy, but extreme in style. Her shoes are run-down at the heel.

MRS. O'BRIEN wears a gaily trimmed hat and a flowered print dress.

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The Dearest Thing in Boots

SCENE

THE front room of MR. WILSON'S store used for fitting shoes. A long table piled with boxes is down stage L, a small table with cash box, books, paper and cord down stage R, a couple of chairs and foot rests at C, doors at R and L. MR. WILSON is discovered leaning against table at R while JACK is straddling a chair.

MR. WILSON: It's been a whole week, Jack, since you first came into the store, so if you've been keeping your ears and eyes open, you will have caught on to some of my methods.

JACK: Take it from me, dad, I have. They are in a class by themselves. Summed up briefly, as the minister says, they are [*checks each point on fingers*]: Firstly, soak a customer for all she's worth, or you think she's worth. Secondly, if a shoe is too expensive, take off a *cent or two*. Thirdly, if it is too cheap, which doesn't happen very often, take it to the rear where you change the *price* but not the *shoe*, bring it back and tuck on a *dollar or two*. Fourthly, always side in with everything a customer says, even if she insists that the moon is made of green cheese. Fifthly, always, always,—oh, what does my thumb say, dad? I've run out.

MR. WILSON: Never fail to make a sale, that's what it says.

JACK: That's it. I knew it was something like that. Do you want me to start on the other hand, now?

MR. WILSON: No, that will do to begin with. I'm glad you've been keeping your ears and eyes open so well. Now, I hope you use your tongue to as good advantage. Since the only way to learn the shoe business is to stand firmly on your own feet, I'm going to let you get your first experience this afternoon in waiting on customers, by yourself. I will not interfere unless I see that you are going to lose a sale.

JACK [*kicking over footrest*]: Lose a sale? Not on your life! Just see me put it all over the dears until they'll

be tumbling over each other to buy. Leave it to your Uncle Dudley. [*Fixes footrest and resumes former position.*]

MR. WILSON: It's been a whole week, Jack, since you first came into the store, so if you've been keeping your ears and eyes open, you will have caught on to some of my methods.

MR. WILSON: Don't be so sure, young man. There's many a spill between the dollar and till and women are pernickety things to handle at any time. [*Bell tinkles.*] Here comes your first customer. Good luck. [*Exit door L.*]

JACK [*cranes neck towards door R*]: If it isn't Betty Moffat, the dearest thing in boots. [*Jumps up hastily, overturning chair.*] I'm going to sell her the peachiest shoes in the whole establishment, the little queen!

Enter BETTY door R.

BETTY: Why Jack, are *you* here? I didn't even know you had started to work.

JACK [*replaces chair*]: Well, I like that! I'd like you to know that I have worked more or less all my young life.

BETTY: Principally less. I'd imagine.

JACK [*hits his head*]: Did you say this was a slammy day? Well, I have started to work in earnest this afternoon for dad has given me the job of waiting on all the customers and you're the first.

BETTY: Am I really? I'm so glad.

JACK: The pleasure is all mine and—the shelling out all yours. [*Draws himself up pompously.*] And what can I do for you, madam?

BETTY [*giggles*]: Oh Jack, you're too funny for words. I want to buy a pair of dancing slippers. Have you any nice ones?

JACK: It's a mighty good thing you asked for the nice ones because we're out of the other kind. Then you're going to the dance tonight? Save me a dozen or two, won't you?

BETTY [*leans parasol against table R It falls down and both collide in picking it up*]: Oh, look at my hat! It's all crooked. [*Fixes it.*] Is it on straight now?

JACK: No, it's tilted a little to the left side.

BETTY: Then it is on straight. [*Takes mirror from vanity bag and tilts hat farther.*] There, it's all right now.

JACK [*aside*]: I never knew that crooked meant straight before, but one is always learning. [*Aloud.*] You didn't say whether you'd save me those dances.

BETTY [*coquettishly*]: I may save you one or two, I'll think about it.

JACK: Put your whole mind to it, then. Now just take this chair. I'm the doctor. And what size do you take?

BETTY: Two's and a half.

JACK: By jove, but you have mighty dainty little feet!

BETTY [*pleased*]: Do you think so?

JACK: I don't think, I know. It will be no feat to fit them. [*Takes a box from table and brings it over.*] Here is just the very thing you want. [*Takes out slippers.*] Aren't they classy? Let me try one on.

BETTY [*kicks off pump*]: They are rather nice, aren't they? [*Puts foot on footrest. JACK tries to put slipper on, but fails.*]

JACK: These are too small, Betty. You'll need a half size larger. [*He starts to go towards table L.*]

BETTY [*indignantly*]: They're not a bit too small. I never take a larger size than that. [*Jerks slipper on.*] There, you see I can get it on. I think you're real mean, trying to make out that I have big feet.

JACK: Upon my soul. [*Hits sole of boot.*] Betty, I'm not doing anything of the kind. You have the dearest little feet I have ever seen, but you can see for yourself that that slipper is too tight. I'd hate to have you get a horrid corn for somebody to trample on and—

BETTY [*jumps up angrily*]: The very idea! There's only one boy I've danced with who's ever trampled on my feet and you're not going to get the chance tonight, so there! [*Stamps foot with slipper on, grimaces and hops on one foot.*] Ouch!

JACK: What's the matter?

BETTY: I—I—oh, I turned on my ankle. It's weak you know.

JACK: It wasn't the slipper's fault, was it?

BETTY [*indignantly*]: Of course it wasn't; the very idea, as though it could hurt anything. [*Goes behind his back, takes off slipper and rubs her toes.*]

JACK: But that slam you gave me, you didn't mean what you said, did you?

BETTY: What about?

JACK: Why, my dancing, and—

BETTY: I do, I mean every word of it.

JACK: Well. I'm sorry, Betty, if I have offended you. Take these if you want to. All I can say is that I'd hate to have to stand in your shoes.

BETTY: I tell you they're *not* too small, *they're not, they're not, they're not!* But I'll not take them nor any other either. [*Sits down, takes off slipper and puts on her own.*] You can keep your old slippers.

Enter MR. WILSON from door L.

MR. WILSON: You'll have to make allowance for this new clerk of mine, Miss Moffat. You see you're his first

customer so he's pretty green at the business. Let me try this slipper on. [*Picks it up.*] Jack, did you use a shoe horn?

JACK [*sulkily*]: No, I didn't. Should you?

MR. WILSON: Of course. No wonder you had trouble putting it on. [*Puts it on her foot.*] There, it fits perfectly, Miss Moffat. You have such pretty feet, it's a pleasure to fit them.

BETTY: I'm glad *you* think so. Mr. Wilson. I'll take them. How much are they?

MR. WILSON: They're twelve dollars, Miss Moffat, but seeing that you've had so much annoyance with our new clerk, I'm going to let you have them for eleven, ninety-five. [*Wraps them up.*]

BETTY [*gathering parasol, purse etc.*]: Thank you, Mr. Wilson. Charge them to dad. [*Takes parcel and goes towards door R.*] Good-bye.

JACK [*rushes to open door*]: Good-bye, Betty. I'll see you at the dance.

BETTY [*haughtily*]: You'll not fail to see my big feet, at any rate, Mr. Wilson. [*Exit.*]

JACK [*sinks into chair*]: The dearest thing in boots! And now I've made her so mad that she'll never speak to me again. All over a measely half-size in slippers. Who'd think a girl could be so silly!

MR. WILSON: That's the great idea, my son. You're learn-women out of ten want boots too small for them and won't take anything else. That's why women can endure pain better than men; they get used to it, breaking in tight shoes.

JACK: The Chinese have nothing on them, believe me! [*Shakes finger at father.*] And you old fraud you, you side in with them and then later on sell them corn plasters and bunion-easers and arch-supports and all the rest of the instruments of torture.

MR. WILSON: That's the great idea, by son. You're learning fast. But you must confess that my method is better than sending a customer away angry, and it has put you through college, besides, remember that.

JACK: I do dad. Rule number six—always tell a woman that you're sure she takes a half-size smaller boot than you know she does.

MR. WILSON: That's it. As a rule it tickles them all to pieces. And you get their money and their good-will to boot. [*Bell tinkles.*] Here's another customer. Better luck this time. [*Exit MR. WILSON. JACK busies himself at table.*]

Enter MISS FIRMROCK.

JACK: How do you do, Miss Firmrock, and what can I do for you today?

MISS FIRMROCK: Young man, before I buy anything from you, I must know how you stand on the woman suffrage question. Do you believe that women should take an active part in politics now that they are given the vote?

JACK [*taken back*]: Do I believe what?

MISS FIRMROCK: That women should mix up in politics. [*Emphasize words by pounding floor with umbrella.*]

JACK [*aside*]: Now what in the dickens does she want me to say? From her wording, I'd say she was agin the petticoat government. [*Aloud grandly.*] My dear Madam, the woman's place is in the home, cooking the meals, keeping the house clean, —er—er—making the children's dresses er—er—winding up the cat and putting the clock out. Why should women need to enter into politics? Is not her influence greater at home? Who has not heard that beautiful and noble sentiment—"The hand that *rules* the cradle *rocks* the world." [*Aside.*] Gee, I didn't know I was such a speaker. [*Starts to strut.*] I hope dad got that.

MISS FIRMROCK: I knew as soon as I looked at you that you were one of these lordly males, who believe in keeping women a slave, a household drudge, with no more rights than the criminal, the child and the imbecile. If women do not help to do the governing, who is going to make decent laws? Who is going to see that the bachelor pays twice as much in taxes as the man who has a family to support? Who is going to make this beautiful country of ours a decent place to live in? The men? [*Scornfully.*] They've had their try at it ever since Columbus discovered America. And what have they accomplished? [*Snaps her fingers.*] Not that! I want *nothing* from you sir. I shall buy only in a store where woman is not trodden upon. [*Starts to go.*]

JACK [*aside*]: Imagine me treading on the likes of her? But good-night! I've backed the wrong horse. How in the world am I going to fix it? [*Taps his head.*] I've got it! A little bit of soft soap goes a long way. [*Aloud.*] Miss Firmrock, one moment, please. [*She turns at door.*] I had never given the matter any thought or I certainly wouldn't have said what I did. But you have enlightened me. [*Bowing.*] You have made me see that women must enter the political arena to fight the beasts of bachelor's vice and—and—no—backed dresses! You have shown me that men as uplifters are failures, that women alone can reform the world. Miss Firmrock, how can I thank you?

MISS FIRMROCK [*comes back to C shakes his hand*]: It gives me great pleasure to know a man who is so open to convictions as you are, Mr. Wilson; and I will feel that I have accomplished something in life since I have converted you to our cause. But really Mr. Wilson I never knew that you were such an orator. I am going to put you down for a speech at our Women's Club next Wednesday evening. How will this subject suit you. "The Failures Men Have Made." [*Takes out note-book and writes.*]

JACK [*aside, pretending to faint against table*]: Suffering cats, what next! [*Aloud.*] My dear Miss Firmrock, [*aside*] Gee, it sounds like a proposal. [*Aloud.*] I've never made a speech in public in all my life and I—

MISS FIRMROCK [*interrupts*]: Then it's time you were beginning.

JACK [*desperately*]: Oh, really, I can't possibly go that night; I have another engagement; I—I—you see I have to go to prayer meeting.

MISS FIRMROCK: To prayer meeting! I've never seen you there in my life, so you can put off your starting for another week.

JACK [*aside*]: If I don't have nervous prostration by then, there's nothing for it but to get myself smashed up in an auto accident. [*Aloud.*] Well, I'll do my best, Miss Firmrock. Were you wanting to buy anything?

MISS FIRMROCK: Yes, a pair of boots.

JACK [*pulls chair out*]: Now just sit here, Miss Firmrock and I'll fit you. What size do you take?

MISS FIRMROCK: Six and a half.

JACK [*aside as he gets a box from table*]: Now, let me see; the rule I've learned by bitter experiences is, "Tell the dears they have such little feet you're sure they should take a smaller size. Very well, I'll just do that little thing. [*Aloud.*] Now let me try these sixes on you, Miss Firmrock. I'm sure you can't take a larger size than that, you have such little feet. [*Gets down on knees to fit shoe. Miss F. boxes his ears and he tumbles over.*"]

MISS FIRMROCK: How dare you make fun of my feet? [*Whacks him with umbrella. JACK jumps up.*] I know they're large and I'm proud of it. The only people capable of having big ideas in their heads are the ones with feet large enough to give them a good understanding. [*Grabs parcels.*] I'd like you to know that I'm not a

silly, giggling fashion-plate who insults her feet by sticking them into shoes far too small for them and then minces along with her heels raised on stilts. I can see you can't suit me so I'll try another store, and you needn't bother about that speech, either. We can manage without it. [*Goes towards door R.*]

Enter MR. WILSON.

MR. WILSON [*goes forward and shakes hands*]: How-do-you do, Miss Firmrock. Allow me to congratulate you on the excellent work you did in the prohibition campaign. It's women like you who are bringing about the reforms that are so badly needed in this country. And did you get the boots you wanted?

MISS FIRMROCK: No, I didn't, this son of yours insulted me, sir.

MR. WILSON: Oh, I'm sure he didn't do it intentionally. But it is his first day at the shoe business and he hasn't gotten onto the hang of it yet. It is a pair of boots you were wanting?

MISS FIRMROCK [*appeased*]: Yes, a good sensible boot that I don't have to be thinking about all the time.

MR. WILSON: We have the very thing. [*Takes box from table and shows her a very large boot.*] This size is seven as it doesn't come in half sizes. You see it has a low heel, wide last, cushion sole, everything that tends for comfort. The price is twenty dollars and thirty cents.

MISS FIRMROCK: I like the boot immensely, but I wouldn't think of paying such a price. It's exorbitant.

MR. WILSON: Not for this boot, Madam. This is a very special boot, designed for broadminded women by the greatest suffragette leader the world has ever known. [*Impressively.*] Madam, this is the *Pankhurst* boot you see before you. We are not allowed to sell it to anyone who has not done something for the great cause. You have proved yourself worthy, Miss Firmrock. [*Bows.*]

MISS FIRMROCK [*flattered*]: Oh, Mr. Wilson, do you really think so? I'll take them and [*gushes*] every time I wear them, I'll feel as though they were a bond uniting that noble woman and me—and I'll recommend them to every woman I know.

MR. WILSON: In that case, I'll give them to you for twenty and a quarter. Would you like to try them on?

MISS FIRMROCK [*pays*]: Oh no, I'll wait until I get home. [*Takes boots.*] Good afternoon, Mr. Wilson. I hope you'll be able to make something out of your son some day. He certainly doesn't seem to take after you.

MR. WILSON: No, I can't say that he does. He is just like his mother. [*Exit Miss FIRMROCK.*]

JACK [*mops his brow*]: Good lord, dad. If I have any more of this, I'll be a stark, staring lunatic by tonight. [*Shakes finger at him.*] And I'll never trust your old rules again. Look what that one did for me.

MR. WILSON: But there's an exception to every rule, and if you knew anything about feminine psychology, you would know at a glance that Miss Firmrock was the exception, the one out of a thousand.

JACK: Hang feminine psychology and feminine vanity and feminine feet and feminine everything else! A gents' establishment for mine! [*Brightens up.*] But this last failure of mine has saved you a mighty lot of money and worry, dad.

MR. WILSON: How do you make that out?

JACK: It has prevented you from having your ear smashed to pieces and your son in the hospital. [*Bell tinkles.*] By jove, here's another customer. This is a Jonah day for son Jack, all right.

MR. WILSON: That's a queer name to apply to a busy day.

JACK: Well, I'm having a whale of a time, aren't I?

Exit MR. WILSON, laughing, at door L. Enter MRS. ATKINS at door R.

JACK: Good-morning, Mrs. Atkins, and what can I do for you this afternoon?

MRS. ATKINS: Will you show me your litest style in boots?

JACK [*puzzled*]: Lightest? Do you mean boots with thin soles?

MRS. ATKINS: No, it's good 'eavy walkin' boots I want, but they must be in the litest style. I always gets the litest in everything. Me 'usband, 'ee tells me I hain't anything if not stylish.

JACK: Is it something in white you were wanting? That is the lightest color we keep. [*Gets white boots.*]

MRS. ATKINS: Oh, no. I want black so that I can wear them every day.

JACK: But you said you wanted the lightest—

MRS. ATKINS: Yes, the litest in black.

JACK [*aside*]: The lightest in black! The woman must be crazy!

MR. WILSON *comes to door*. MRS. A. *examines boots*.

MR. WILSON [*aside to JACK*]: *Latest, latest*, you chump! Don't you know she's English?

JACK [*aside*]: I get you! [*Aloud.*] Oh, you mean the latest, Mrs. Atkins?

MRS. ATKINS [*tartly*]: Isn't that what I said, the litest in black?

JACK [*hurriedly*]: Yes, certainly, Mrs. Atkins, and we have the very latest here; never keep any other kind, in fact. [*Places chair for her.*] Just take this chair, please. [*Aside.*] Now, which class does she belong to, the size smaller or size larger? Blest, if I know. I'll try her

on dad's Pankhurst dope first. Shouldn't wonder but she would fall for that when she's so English. [*Takes shoe from table and holds it up.*] Here, madam, you have before you the very latest thing in boots, no other than the Pankhurst, designed by the celebrated suffragette leader herself and— [MRS. ATKINS *knocks boot out of his hand.*] Why what's the matter?

MRS. ATKINS [*vehemently*]: Don't you dare to sell me a boot that horrid woman's 'ad anything to do with.

JACK [*aside*]: Struck it wrong again. Oh the contrariness of woman. [*Aloud.*] But my dear madam, surely you're an admirer of the woman who was the greatest pioneer in fighting for the vote for women?

MRS. ATKINS [*jumps up excitedly*]: That's the very reason I 'ate 'er. Votes for wimen! What does wimen want with votes? Us women 'ave enough to do to cook our 'usbands' meals and tend the childrens' noses and clean up the 'ouse after the man's gone to work, leaving hashes and mud all over the floor, the way he does. [*Looks at boots on table.*]

JACK [*aside, indicating fourth finger*]: This finger says, Agree with everything a customer says. [*Aloud.*] That's my idea, entirely, Mrs. Atkins. I agree with you there.

MRS. ATKINS [*turns on him*]: What do you know about it, young man?

JACK [*confused*]: Why, I—I—

MRS. ATKINS: Hit's me who's 'ad to suffer on account of the wimen being given the vote. My 'usband, 'ee's a great one for electioneering, 'ee 'is, but he never used to leave me alone at nights until wimen got the frances. [*Sobs.*] H'ever since then, 'ee's been spending 'is 'evenings in other wimen's 'omes, teaching them how to vote and he's never h'at 'ome any more except for his meals. Ee do be regular for them, I must si. Ee 'as such an appetite. [*Sighs deeply several times.*]

JACK [*aside*]: So that's where the shoe pinches! [*Aloud.*] Now, that's too bad, Mrs. Atkins. I don't blame you for not wanting the Pankhurst boot. I wouldn't wear it myself. I'll show you something else. What size?

MRS. ATKINS: And you'd sigh, too, young man, if you had the troubles I've had, with your 'usband finding fault with the cooking ever since other wimen have been feeding him up and—

JACK [*hurriedly*]: What size boot do you take? That's what I mean, Mrs. Atkins.

MRS. ATKINS [*gets ready to go*]: It doesn't matter wet size I tike, for I'm not tiking any boots. That's the only style of boot I want hand I'd buy it in a minute if it didn't 'ave that odious woman's nime connected with it. Not content with breaking windows, she 'as to break up 'omes, too, the hussy. [*Goes towards door R.* Good-h'afternoon, sir.

Enter MR. WILSON.

MR. WILSON: Why, good-afternoon, Mrs. Atkins. I trust you've been served satisfactorily?

MRS. ATKINS [*tartly*]: No, I 'aven't, not with the Pankhurst boot.

MR. WILSON [*picks up boot*]: Jack, why didn't you show her this anti-suffragette style. I'm sure Mrs. Atkins would like this.

MRS. ATKINS: *The H'ante-suffragette?* Why, 'ee told me it was the Pankhurst and—

MR. WILSON [*looks surprised*]: Why, Jack, however could you make such a mistake as that? The Pankhurst is a different shoe, altogether. Only dowdy people wear them. I wouldn't think of trying to sell that shoe to *you*, Mrs. Atkins. But you'll have to make allowance for my son, here. You see this is his first day in selling

and he really doesn't know one style from the other. But he'll soon learn.

JACK [*aside as he tidies up the tables*]: Not in a thousand years, believe me!

MRS. ATKINS: I 'ope so, but 'ee doesn't look any too bright, Mr. Wilson. [JACK *shakes fist in her direction.*]

MR. WILSON: Everyone says he takes after his mother. [*Holds up boot.*] Now, this is the very latest thing we have, worn by all the fashionable and sensible ladies who are against this tomfoolery of women voting and entering into politics. It does nothing but break up homes and—and—would you like to try it on?

MRS. ATKINS [*hurriedly*]: Oh no, I'm sure it's the right size by the looks of it. [*Aside.*] I wouldn't for h'anything let him see the'ole where my big toe 'as worked through my stocking. [*Aloud.*] I'll tike them, Mr. Wilson if they're not too expenses.

MR. WILSON: The price is ten dollars and forty-five cents, but I'm only charging you ten-forty on account of the trouble you have had with my son. [*Wraps boots up.*]

MRS. ATKINS: H'all right, Mr. Wilson, Atkins will be in to piy for them Saturday night when 'ee gits his week's wages. [*Takes parcel.*] Good h'afternoon, sir. [*Turns towards JACK.*] And to you too, sir. I ain't 'olding any 'ard feelings agin you. You didn't know any better. [*Exit.*]

JACK [*wildly rumples hair as he strides back and forth*]: Good heavens, this is awful. [*Stops in front of MR. WILSON.*] Do you see any change in my hair, dad?

MR. WILSON: No, why?

JACK: Then it hasn't turned grey?

MR. WILSON [*laughs*]: It will take more than that to turn your head grey. But I thought you were going to put it all over the dears until they would be tumbling over each other to buy. Have I quoted you correctly?

JACK: That's right, rub it in. But when I said that, I didn't know that I had to be a politician and a feminine psychologist and—and an accomplished liar in order to sell a woman a pair of boots.

MR. WILSON: Not a liar son. Be careful what you call your respected parent.

JACK: Well, if what you have been doing all afternoon isn't lying, I'd like to know what you'd call it.

MR. WILSON: Diplomacy, my boy.

JACK: The same thing under a fancy name.

MR. WILSON: Not at all. A lie is telling what is absolutely untrue, Diplomacy is—is—oh yes, it is a skillful juggling of the truth. [*Bell tinkles.*] Here comes your next triumph. I tell you what I'll do. I'll give you ten dollars for every pair of boots, shoes or slippers that you sell. [*Exit door L.*]

JACK: I guess he knows his money's safe.

Enter MRS. O'BRIEN, loaded up with bundles.

MRS. O'BRIEN [*drops bundles on table and mops brow.*]: The saints presarve us, it is a hot day and it's the loikes of me that knows it, bendin' over the washboard ivery day of me loife, ceptin' the blissed howly-day, doin' other folk's worruk while they dressin silks and satin. Snure and Oim afther thinking things ain't avenly divided in this worruld, they ain't. [*Fans herself with hat.*]

JACK [*aside*]: She's a living eight-day clock. [*Aloud.*] They sure aren't, Mrs. O'Brien, I agree with you there.

MRS. O'BRIEN: And be yez a socialist loike meself?

JACK: Sure thing. I've never been anything else.

MRS. O'BRIEN: Then yez belave the rich should share with the downtrodden poor?

JACK [*aside*]: Rule 4. Always agree etc. [*Aloud.*] Certainly they should share and share alike I say.

MRS. O'BRIEN [*Throws arms around him*]: Shure and yez is a boh-y afther me own heart. [*JACK forces himself.*] It be a pity that yer father ain't afther belavin' the same as yez. But he's a harrud skin-flit, he is and Oi'm only afther hopin' that yez don't be takin' afther him.

JACK [*goes to door L and says aside*]: Get that dad? The shoe's on the other foot now. [*Aloud.*] I don't. He was just telling a customer a few minutes ago that I wasn't the least bit like him. And what can I sell you today? [*As MRS. O'BRIEN talks, he gets behind her and pretends to wind her up.*]

MRS. O'BRIEN: Shure and Oim afther buyin' shoes for all the chilrun. There's Betsy aged noine, she's me roight-hand girrul. Then there's Pat ond Moike, twins they be both borrun at the same toime and sick limbs of Satan yez niver see, bless their hearuts. They're siven. Then there's Norah, she's foive, the swatest crather that iver wuz hit she wears out her souls loike they wuz paper. And there's the baby, he's jest crapin', his name be Rory afther his dad.

JACK [*picks up large box*]: Here is just what you need, Mrs. O'Brien, boots in family lots. [*Empties them out.*] They come cheaper that way. [*Pulls out very small shoe.*] Now, these are just the thing for Betsy.

MRS. O'BRIEN: Bless me sowl! Me Betsy could niver git aven her big toe into the loikes of them. They're more Norah's size.

JACK: That's right. I meant Norah. My mistake. [*Pulls out two pairs.*] And these will suit the twins, Rory and Mike—

MRS. O'BRIEN: Shure and Rory is six years behint Moike in comin' into the worruld. It's Pat—

JACK: Oh yes, of course, Pat and Mike. They always go togetther. Well these will suit—

MRS. O'BRIEN: But shure and me Pat tikes a larger size than Moike as his fate are bigger.

JACK: All the better, one of these is a size larger than the other. Family lots are always sold that way. Now here's the baby's [*holds up booties*] and here's [*holds up a larger shoe*] one pair for the baby to grow into as its—[MRS. O'BRIEN *throws up her hands.*] Why, what's the matter?

MRS. O'BRIEN: Och, a—nee—o! And it's mesilf that be the unnathural parunt. Oi don't be desarvin' to have chilrun, Oi don't. Here be me Danny at home waitin' to fill them shoes and me forgittin' all about the darlint. Oi'll be afther takin' them all, Misther Wilson, and plaze wrap them in that pitcher page. [*Points to colored supplement.*] So that the chilrun can look at the pitchers. [JACK *wraps them up.*]

JACK [*aside*]: Six pairs of shoes and dad has promised me ten dollars a pair. Pretty good buisness, I'll tell the world. [*Aloud.*] These come to twenty-three dollars and seventy cents, Mrs. O'Brien, but to encourage the raising of large families, I'll just charge twenty-three, sixty-eight. Will you pay for them now or have them charged? [*Gives her the shoes.*]

MRS. O'BRIEN [*indignantly*]: Pay, did yez say? And whoiver talked of payin'? Wuzun't yez jist afther sayin' yez wuz a socialist and yez belaved the rich should share with the poor and—

JACK: Yes, but—

MRS. O'BRIEN [*interrupts*]: And ain't yez rich and me as poor as Paddy's pig afther they took it's straw bed away? Niver a cint will Oi be afther payin'. [*Starts towards door R.*]

JACK: Oh, but I didn't mean that you could cart away the whole—

MRS. O'BRIEN: Then yez should say phwat yez mane and mane phwat yez say. Oi wuz jist afther takin' yez at yer worrud. [*Opens door.*]

MR. WILSON [*comes in quickly*]: Just a minute, Mrs. O'Brien.

MRS. O'BRIEN [*drops bundles*]: Howly Moses, and where be yez afther comin' from?

MR. WILSON [*picks up shoes*]: From the back of the store and Mrs. O'Brien, I'm very sorry, but you can't have these shoes unless you pay cash for them.

MRS. O'BRIEN: Pay cash? And Oi'd loike to know how the loikes of me can pay cash whin Ii haven't a cint to my name. Bad cess to yez, yez ould skin-flint. [*Shakes fist in his face.*] Yez would skin a flea for its hide, yez would. May the saints forgit yez and the devil fly away with yez. [*Exit.*]

JACK: Merciful heavens, dad, isn't she a howly terror? But what gets me is after raising my hope to the high pinnacle of sixty dollars, she shooed them away, worse luck! I confess, dad, that I'm an out and out failure. I've never put in such a day in all my life. I'll sell newspapers, shovel coal, dig ditches or—or—or even teach school before I'll put in another. I'm through. Not another customer will I wait on for all the money in the world. [*Bell tinkles.*] There goes that darned bell. It's me for the back shop this time. [*Hurries toward door L.*]

MR. WILSON [*looks toward entrance*]: Why, it's Betty Moffat back, I wonder—

JACK [*rushes back*]: I'll wait on her, dad. Clear out.

Enter BETTY.

MR. WILSON: But I thought—

JACK: Don't, it's bad for the brain. Hustle. [*Exit MR. WILSON.*] Why, Bett—Miss Moffat, I didn't think—

BETTY [*mischievously*]: Don't, it's bad for the brain.
[*Both laugh.*] I've come back to tell you you were right
and—

JACK [*puzzled*]: Right? What about?

BETTY: Why about those slippers; they *are* too small for
me.

JACK [*aside*]: Hanged if I hadn't forgotten all about
that, but goodness knows I've had enough other things to
worry about. [*Aloud.*] Oh, no, Betty, I'm sure they
are the right size; you have such dear little—

BETTY: But they *are* too small I tried to dance in them
when I got home and they hurt my feet like everything.

JACK [*tenderly*]: Poor little feet!

BETTY: And I want a half size larger. [*Sits down. JACK
gets slippers and kneels to fit them.*] And—and I'm
awfully sorry, Jack, that I was so horrid. I've got a
nasty, mean temper and—

JACK: Now, don't you dare call yourself names. Why
Betty, you're the sweetest girl that ever lived, you're—
you're the dearest thing in boots!

BETTY: That's just what daddy says when he gets the
bills for them.

JACK: Oh, but I didn't mean it that way I— [*Aside.*]
Hang it, I wish dad weren't taking in every word I say.
[*Calls.*] Dad, come on out here and mind your robber's
den yourself for awhile. Betty and I are going to the
ice-cream parlor. Come on, Betty. [*Drags her a few
steps with one pump on.*]

BETTY: Really Jack, don't you think I ought to put my
other pump on first? I wouldn't like to go like this.
What would people say?

JACK: What a dear little foot! [*Puts her slipper on her
foot.*] Here you are. Come on. [*Exit BETTY and JACK
hand in hand.*]

MR. WILSON [*Enters, picks up slipper and shakes his head*] :
The dearest thing in boots, eh? He's not far off for I'll never be able to sell these. But what's a pair of these to my boy's happiness? [*Pours out glass of water and raises it.*] So here's to the dearest thing in boots—and may they ever continue to buy them—the ladies, God bless them. [*Drinks.*]

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